# The Maori book or the book in Maori

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Two themes run through this paper. In part its intention is to describe a National Library of New Zealand project to publish a microfiche edition of its printed Maori collection, and, because preparatory work on this project produced evidence about the continuing influence of the Maori oral cultural tradition, it will also discuss the question of whether the past 150 years of printing in Maori can be more aptly described as the book in Maori or the Maori book. Don McKenzie provides a stimulating theoretical base for these deliberations in his examination of the movement from orality, through manuscript literacy to the introduction of printing by the mission presses in the twenty or so years preceding the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840.[1] He writes of the absurdity of missionary aspirations to achieve in twenty-five years what had taken Europe centuries, and of our assumptions that the printed word has achieved ascendancy over oral witness.

The Treaty of Waitangi is the basis of British sovereignty in New Zealand, and, although its status is hotly debated, commemorative celebrations are planned for the sesquicentennial in 1990. One National Library project, *Te Putea Korero,* involves the re-cataloguing, indexing, and microfiching of all printing Maori to the year 1960. Planning for this project is part of my job as Maori Materials Subject Specialist at the Alexander Turnbull Library, the research arm of the National Library.

Maori printing has been well served bibliographically. Archdeacon H. W. William's comprehensive listing (published by him initially in 1924 and supplemented in 1928) covers works published before 1900.[2] It was extended by a Library School bibliographic exercise in 1947.[3] Williams included 'any work however small, printed wholly in Maori, or in Maori with a translation ... also any work dealing wholly with the Maori language. Entries were made based not only on actual examination of a copy, but also upon information gathered from a reliable source.[4] Around 1200 items are recorded of which fifty per cent are less than four pages long. A further thirty-six per cent are less than forty-eight pages long and fourteen per cent are forty-nine pages or more. These statistics point to the largely ephemeral nature of much of the printing. That so much of it survives is due to the efforts of Sir George Grey, who both commissioned and collected publications, and to Alexander Turnbull's close personal association with printers, scholars and collectors in the early years of this century.

Only 250 listed items are not held in the Turnbull collection and most of these are almanacs, or translations of acts of Parliament which Williams had found reference to, but had not sighted himself. A comparison of the Turnbull collection with that based on Grey's private library, now at the Auckland Public Library, found seventy titles held only in Auckland, and 357 held only at Turnbull. Collections in other libraries are very, very small in comparison so that the National Library's responsibility to provide surrogate copies is quite clear.

## Recording Maori collections

The difficulties many libraries face in cataloguing Maori printing has led to a common practice of annotating a copy of the Williams bibliography, which then serves as catalogue and shelf list. If a previously unrecorded item is acquired a note is added in the appropriate place and a supplementary number assigned to it. Unfortunately there is no co-ordination of numbering, which would not be a problem if some libraries were not now attempting retrospective cataloguing as they join the New Zealand Bibliographic Network. (It is of some concern, but only to national pride, that the first such retrospective work is being undertaken at the National Library of Australia!)

The work I have done on the printed Maori collection has been rewarding. One characteristic of the Turnbull collection is that many copies are working texts collected from Turnbull's colleagues and are often heavily annotated. Although fascinating in themselves they are hardly copies of last resort, the 'type specimens' which should make up the national collection. The search on our duplicate shelves and in auction catalogues for clean, unbound copies to replace them with has turned up variant editions, some twenty to thirty previously unrecorded items and — a high point for a collector — a title recorded in Williams but never seen by him was bought in a job lot of duplicates from an unsuspecting auctioneer! Our imminent move to the new National Library building is providing the opportunity for a systematic shelf check and comparison with duplicate and reserve copies, a project I approach eagerly in anticipation of further bibliographic finds.

## The microfiching project

With up to 200 additions to be made to Williams' *Bibliography*, the possibility of extending that listing to 1960 (when the New Zealand National Bibliography began recording significant Maori publications), and the recognised need to share the richness of the Turnbull collection with the rest of the country, the microfiching project as it has been conceived is complex, with work to proceed on several fronts. First, an indexing project is necessary to make the contents of the Maori language periodicals more accessible; second, revision of the


Masthead of a notice issued by the King movement (Williams, No. 810b). Alexander Turnbull Library.

bibliographic records; third, a nation-wide search for the best copy to microfiche. The product, with a total page count of around 56,000, could be made available for as little as $600 for the pre-1900 section. This project has at its heart the main concern of this IFLA Section, retrospective bibliographic control. It supports the twin goals of Universal Availability of Publications and Universal Bibliographic Control and fulfills Alex Wilson's expectations of a research library in that it is motivated by a concern for the long-term preservation of a scarce resource and the provision of surrogate copies for the library and Maori communities.[5] Nevertheless I have serious doubts about its relevance to the very Maori community we hope to serve. This international audience has more intrinsic interest in the project than any that would assemble locally. The bibliographic delights I have described are lonely joys, as there are no other librarians working in the field with whom news of a new discovery could be shared. There is, moreover, only a minimal risk of the printed Maori collection wearing out through overuse!

In the search for an explanation of why this should be so, an analysis of the subject content of the collection is illuminating. For the pre-1900 period fifty-five per cent can be classed as religious or associated with the work of the missions, twenty-five per cent are government publications and the remaining twenty per cent are political items and grammars and dictionaries. It was 1860 when the first publication by a Maori appeared, and this, a notice issued by the Maori King, followed a familiar government precedent. In the 1880s and 1890s proceedings of Maori parliaments were issued, by which time about five sporadic periodicals had been issued by Maoris, although they had contributed to many others.

The only publications which have any enduring interest to the Maori reader today are about twenty volumes of song poetry, mythology and traditional history all gathered from Maori sources but edited and published by Europeans, and the periodical literature. Even here the improving tone of many of the government and religious titles obscures information of historical interest. Beyond this the main body of Maori printing is distinguished only by being spectacularly boring.

## Dominance of oral tradition

This lack of participation in printing is one demonstration of the continuing ascendancy of the oral cultural tradition in Maori society. It is an oral tradition displaying features commonly referred to in the literature.[6] A high value was, of necessity, placed on the accurate transmission of information vital to the community's sense of identity and its physical survival. The learning process was surrounded by restrictive practices and there were penalties for errors in performance. A spiritual dimension was imparted to the learning process and the acquired knowledge which contributed to the life force of the learned person. Mastery of the body of tribal history, myth and tradition, poetry, proverbial sayings, ritual and genealogy which contains the inherited wisdom of the ancestors, and the ability to use this knowledge effectively in the speech making that lies at the heart of all Maori cultural activity is still the main measure of personal standing. It is easy to see how imparting that knowledge to others could be seen as diminishing personal strength and power, and inappropriate use of it a desecration. Knowledge is passed only to selected individuals, or in approved ways, contrasting with the European tradition that it should be shared with all who seek to learn.[7]

The use to which research on contemporary or historical issues using textual or oral testimonies is put receives close scrutiny. Any commercial application is viewed with suspicion, and because books are bought and sold, most publication is seen in this way. To the Maori, research and publication simply for the sake of knowing is pointless. It is assumed that the prime motivation for publication by others is monetary gain for the author and an increase in personal reputation. University students are also often criticised for using Maori knowledge in their studies to achieve a degree which increases their standing.

The increasing unwillingness to accept any European writing on Maori topics is expressed by Te Aroha McDowell. She also reveals a Maori attitude to texts:

> Copyright and authorship have their parallels in matters Maori ... A product of someone's intelligence comes not from that person alone but from the collective intelligence. It is called a taonga [a treasure] and is submitted first to the scrutinised judgement of the tribe and then to its protection. The tribe decides the purpose that taonga is permitted to serve. In the pakeha context the writer as individual is owner of the product of her intelligence. Her pakeha tribe is unlikely to hold her accountable for her interpretation ... Maori people have been challenging pakeha publishing for a long time ... Maori self-determination through writing is encumbered, shackled, compromised and misrepresented by publications such as *The Birth of Maui*.[8]

Parallels are not drawn between the vigorous oral debate which produces an agreed text through consensus which is not then questioned, and the European tradition of expressing a personal opinion in print and inviting further comment in the same medium. While reactions to publications are fully discussed at tribal meetings an injunction to prevent further distribution, or a request that libraries rule red lines through offensive periodical articles is a more likely response. The option of writing in reply is seldom taken up.

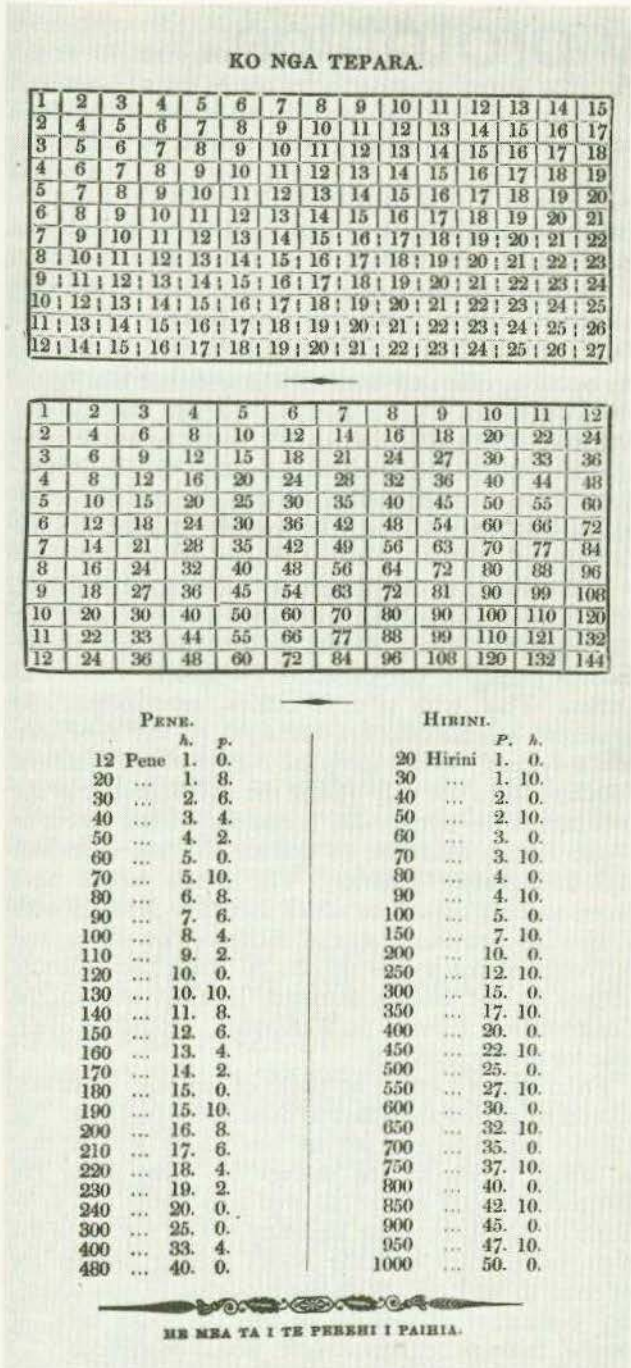
Reactions from the readers of manuscript texts in public libraries and museums also provide interesting insight into Maori attitudes to texts and knowledge. These are a useful guide for curators of collections of Maori manuscripts who want to respond effectively to Maori needs. The spiritual nature of knowledge and the power inherent in the spoken and written words of knowledgeable people is very real to a Maori reader who will often not want to handle an original document without prayers to prepare the way, who may ask that sacred material such as ritual chants and genealogy not be stored in the same folder as more ordinary documents, who may object to a bill for photocopying being presented but will happily give a koha, or gift of money, in exchange for our 'gift' of a copy. A great deal of manuscript material will never be deposited in an institution where the owners feel they lose control of who has access to it and of the use that is made of it. Indeed we still hear of manuscript books being buried with a leader when he or she dies, as their knowledge is seen as an integral part of their whole being.

It should be emphasised that while I have spoken generally of Maori attitudes, Maori society is essentially a tribal society. There are universals, but their expression varies from place to place. Every tribe has its own body of accumulated knowledge and distinctive linguistic characteristics. Contemporary New Zealand society is experiencing something of a cultural revolution, with Maori self-determination being more comprehensively debated than in 1840. The keystone to this revolution is language. In the last five years around 300 kohanga reo, or language nests, have been set up through Maori initiatives, where pre-school children and their parents learn and nurture their language and their cultural values.

## Recent Maori publishing

One of the many effects of this development is a demand for teaching aids, and a huge increase in the publication of children's books in Maori. The relative merits of dual or monolingual texts, locally written stories and translations of popular imported books are vigorously discussed. A distinct preference is shown for texts which use the local variation of language, which draw on local traditional history, and which reflect Maori cultural values, thus creating a demand which can only be met through local, very small scale publication. Two spin-off effects are the increasing use being made of library collections of printed and manuscript texts, and the creation of small resource centres and projects to record information on tape, or video, or in written form on a family, community, or tribal basis.

A content analysis of the last ten years of printing in Maori shows a marked change from the previous 140 years. The Turnbull shelf list records 130 items for the period: thirty-three are linguistic (dictionaries, language courses, etc); six are government publications; fifteen



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| 4 | 8 | 12 | 16 | 20 | 24 | 28 | 32 | 36 | 40 | 44 | 48 |
| 5 | 10 | 15 | 20 | 25 | 30 | 35 | 40 | 45 | 50 | 55 | 60 |
| 6 | 12 | 18 | 24 | 30 | 36 | 42 | 48 | 54 | 60 | 66 | 72 |
| 7 | 14 | 21 | 28 | 35 | 42 | 49 | 56 | 63 | 70 | 77 | 84 |
| 8 | 16 | 24 | 32 | 40 | 48 | 56 | 64 | 72 | 80 | 88 | 96 |
| 9 | 18 | 27 | 36 | 45 | 54 | 63 | 72 | 81 | 90 | 99 | 108 |
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| 90 | ... | 7. | 6. |
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| 140 | ... | 11. | 8. |
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| 190 | ... | 15. | 10. |
| 200 | ... | 16. | 8. |
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| 550 | ... | 27. | 10. |
| 600 | ... | 30. | 0. |
| 650 | ... | 32. | 10. |
| 700 | ... | 35. | 0. |
| 750 | ... | 37. | 10. |
| 800 | ... | 40. | 0. |
| 850 | ... | 42. | 10. |
| 900 | ... | 45. | 0. |
| 950 | ... | 47. | 10. |
| 1000 | ... | 50. | 0. |

HE MEA TA I TE PEREHI I PAIHIA.

Tables printed by Colenso, 1835. Williams (no. 16) did not locate a copy.

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are collections of songs, edited manuscript texts, collections of proverbs, etc; one is a religious item, and seventy-five are children's readers. Most of these readers are at a primary level and as the bilingual children move from their language nests further up the school system one would expect publications to keep up with their needs. At present these needs are being met by a kind of semi-publishing. The product, a blown-up photocopied text, pasted on to boards and individually coloured, existing in only a few copies per title, is not what we are used to claiming under the legal deposit provisions of the Copyright Act but is a key element in the development of the Maori book as opposed to mere printing in Maori. It is a distinctively *Maori* book we are seeing, written in Maori, serving Maori purposes, and enhancing Maori cultural values. Its emergence has influenced the emphasis we place on our microfiching project. Priority will now be given to indexing and making more accessible those areas of the collection that have most relevance to Maori people today, and the production of hard-copy facsimile editions of selected works will be added to our tasks.

Our perception of the project and the resource it will create must be clear. While we can say that much of the content is not particularly relevant to Maori interests today (especially as political opinion places printing on the list of agents in the subjugation of the Maori people) we must acknowledge that it was the missionary decision to teach and therefore to print in Maori that has enabled the language to survive at all. Initially we are creating a resource which will enable studies of the history of printing in Maori to be made, and indeed the history of printing in New Zealand. Eventually the resource will allow research into the history of the language and the influence of print upon it, particularly in the light of what does appear to be the start of genuinely Maori publishing. If, at the 52nd IFLA General Conference I have been able to report on the book in Maori and what is being done with it in respect of restrospective bibliographic control and Universal Availability of Publications, a report on the Maori book must wait for the 152nd General Conference.

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